

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Office of Current Intelligence  
6 September 1963

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Problems of a Unified Vietnam

1. Leaders in both North and South Vietnam are committed to unification, but neither side has any intention of making significant concessions to obtain this end. For the moment, there is no compelling pressure on either side to give in to the other. Therefore, unless this situation should change and one side prevail essentially by force, there appears to be little prospect that unification can be achieved in the foreseeable future.

2. In contrast with the situation in Germany, there is little popular concern over the issue of unification in either North or South Vietnam. Nor does either area exercise a strong attraction to people in the opposite zone. While Communist officials in their propaganda have shown some concern that the relative abundance of consumer goods in the South may have an adverse effect on the morale of their own people, there is no evidence that this is a serious problem. The strong sense of regionalism within Vietnam contributes to the lack of sentiment for unification.

3. At the official level in the South, thinking and planning on unification have been relegated to the background in view of preoccupation with the immediate problem of surviving as a separate state against Communist subversion. What long-range thinking has been done in the South has been done by Ngo Dinh Nhu. Nhu claims to maintain some contacts with the Vietnamese Communists, with the aim of weaning support away from the Communist hierarchy in Hanoi.

4. If US aid and support were withdrawn from the South, some among its present leaders

might feel compelled to make a deal with Hanoi to achieve some form of personal survival with face-saving, honorary positions. However, they would be unable to maintain any significant control over the policies adopted by the unified government.

5. It is alternately possible that the present leaders might be overthrown by some group hoping to retrieve US support; or, more remotely, by groups prepared to come to terms with the North. Various anti-Diem exiles now in Paris, led primarily by former Bao Daiist Premier Tran Van Huu, are now openly favoring the latter course, and are maintaining liaison with North Vietnamese representatives and supporters in Paris. Hanoi apparently hopes the exile group can be used to weaken overall South Vietnamese opposition to the North's terms for reunification. The end result of a deal by this or similarly inclined South Vietnamese groups would be unification under Communist leadership and control.

6. Hanoi has clearly spelled out its terms for reunification of North and South Vietnam. These terms include the termination and withdrawal of US military support even prior to negotiations on the actual terms of reunification itself. North Vietnam's program calls for a national coalition government comprising all political tendencies to be formed in the South. This Communist dominated coalition would then negotiate with Hanoi, a step which doubtless would result in a "unified" Vietnam under complete Communist control.

7. Despite the historical antipathy toward the Chinese, there is now a strong identity of views between the leaders of North Vietnam and Communist China. During the last few months, Hanoi has publicly adopted a position of supports for Peiping in the Sino-Soviet dispute. The shift in the North Vietnamese position, from all indications, is fully endorsed by Ho Chi Minh himself and probably was motivated by growing concern over Soviet foreign policy moves seemingly aimed at partial detente with the US. The North Vietnamese apparently fear that such Soviet moves may undercut

Communist militancy and support for their own war in South Vietnam.

8. As in all Communist Parties, these undoubtedly are factions within the Vietnamese C.P. We have seen evidence from time to time which suggests differences on such matters as tactics toward the South, internal economic policy, and relations with Peiping and Moscow. However, we have no evidence to even suggest the existence of any faction which at this time is disposed to seek unification on any basis other than Communist control and continued alignment with the Bloc.

9. Short of some drastic alteration in the balance of power between the Bloc and the free world which left Hanoi physically and militarily isolated, we cannot now foresee the development of any circumstances which would cause the North Vietnamese to soften their reunification terms-- terms which would result in a Communist dominated Vietnam.

10. In sum, there appears little of a productive nature that could be done about unification at this time. Over the longer run if the South should develop considerable greater economic strength and political unity, it might then be able to deal from a position of strength on the unification issue. It could champion (UN) internationally-supervised elections or direct negotiations for unification, it could propose the opening of trade and cultural exchanges, and by these and other measures keep the DRU on the defensive. The impact that such progress and action would have on the northern borders or on their ability to control the population can hardly be assessed at this time. Much would depend on the relative rate of economic advance within the North (and the general state of relations with China at the time).